

CITY OF COLUMBIA FALLS
CITY COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
HELD JUNE 02, 2025

Mayor Barnhart called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

ROLL CALL: Councilor King, Councilor Lovering, Councilor Piper, Councilor Price, Councilor Robinson, Councilor Shepard and Mayor Barnhart.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

APPROVAL OF AGENDA: Councilor Piper approved the agenda noting the date change for the Study Commission meeting on June 18, 2025, seconded by Councilor Lovering and the motion carried.

CONSENT AGENDA: Councilor Robinson motioned to approve the consent agenda noting all claims appeared to be in order, seconded by Councilor Shepard with voting as follows. Ayes: Piper, Robinson, Shepard, King, Lovering and Barnhart.

Approval of Claims - June 2, 2025 - \$163,098.14

Approval of Payroll Claims - May 21, 2025 - \$3,812.94

Approval of Payroll Claims - May 23, 2025 - \$188,801.68

Approval of Regular Council Minutes - May 19, 2025

Approval of the 2025 Swim Team MOU

VISITORS/PUBLIC COMMENT (Items not on agenda) Steve Osborne, 134 1st Ave. E. addressed the Council, reflecting that nearly a year had passed since he initially raised concerns regarding sidewalk issues in his neighborhood. He expressed dissatisfaction with the lack of follow-up communication from the City. He noted that a recent discussion provided some hope that the upcoming Phase Two improvements would resolve the water flow problems affecting his property. Mr. Osborne emphasized that flooding had damaged his retaining wall, creating a safety hazard for his grandchildren. He also voiced concerns about the City's inadequate communication regarding previous infrastructure projects and urged the Council to enhance public outreach efforts for the forthcoming phase.

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARINGS/PUBLIC HEARINGS:

Mayor Barnhart read the Notice of Public Hearing - A Zone Change Request from the Existing CI-1 (Light Industrial) to CB-2 (General Commercial)

NEW BUSINESS:

Flathead County Election Administrator-Upcoming Municipal Election

City Manager Hanks said we currently have one candidate that has filed, and the deadline is Wednesday, June 11, 2025.

City Manager Hanks provided an update on the municipal election process, indicating that only one candidate had filed thus far, with a filing deadline of June 11, 2025. Mayor Barnhart expressed disappointment at the limited number of candidates, especially considering recent levels of public engagement in Council chambers. He underscored the importance of civic involvement and encouraged citizens to consider serving the

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community by running for office. Councilor Piper voiced his appreciation for the current Council members and urged prospective candidates to approach service with a spirit of collaboration.

Mayor Barnhart highlighted that two Council members, Councilor Lovering and Councilor Shepard, would not be returning after many years of dedicated service, 12 and 29 years, respectively. He described this as a significant loss of institutional knowledge and encouraged new candidates to come forward with a commitment to collective governance rather than personal agendas.

ORDINANCES / RESOLUTIONS:

Resolution #1941 - Amending the Growth Policy Map at 394 Railroad Street

City Manager Hanks said this resolution is coming forward from the May 27th council meeting, amending the Growth Policy Map at 394 Railroad Street.

Councilor Lovering made motion to adopt Resolution #1941 Amending the Growth Policy Map at 394 Railroad Street, seconded by Councilor Shepard with council voting as follows. Ayes: Price, Robinson, Shepard, King, Lovering, Piper and Barnhart.

Resolution #1942 - Preliminary Plat of Railroad Park Homes

City Manager Hanks reminded the Council that the zoning for this subdivision would be CR-5, consistent with the Growth Policy.

Councilor Piper made motion to adopt Resolution #1942 Preliminary Plat of Railroad Park Homes, seconded by Councilor Lovering with council voting as follows. Ayes: Robinson, Shepard, King, Lovering, Piper, Price and Barnhart.

Ordinance #833 - First Reading - Amending the Columbia Falls Zoning Map from CB-2 to CR-5

City Manager said the following ordinance was presented at the May 27th regular council meeting for initial approval changing the zoning map from CB2 commercial to CR5 two-family residential, at 394 Railroad Street in Columbia Falls.

Councilor Lovering motioned to adopt the first reading of Ordinance #833 amending the Columbia Falls Zoning Map from CB-2 to CR-5, seconded by Councilor Robinson and the motion carried unanimously.

Resolution #1943 - Budget Amendment for the Fiscal Year 24-25 Budget for adjustments to the Resort Tax Fund and Capital Projects Fund

City Manager Hanks said the amendment addressed adjustments to the Resort Tax Fund and Capital Projects Fund. The Resort Tax amendment accounted for tax receipts collected from December 2022 to May 2024 and included a previously approved adjustment of \$87,940 in February. Additional late collections and business-type reclassifications were now being incorporated. The Capital Projects Fund adjustment reflected the unbudgeted sale of a fire truck, generating \$67,500 in revenue. Expenditures included \$17,671 for outfitting a new patrol vehicle and \$6,559 for radio replacements.

Councilor King motioned to adopt Resolution #1943 Budget Amendment for the Fiscal Year 24-25 Budget for adjustments to the Resort Tax Fund and Capital Projects Fund, seconded by Councilor Shepard with council voting as follows. Ayes: Shepard, King, Lovering, Piper, Price, Robinson and Barnhart.

REPORTS / BUSINESS FROM MAYOR & COUNCIL

Councilor Piper noted difficulty hearing audio from a video posted on the city website and thanked staff for

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ongoing work to improve it. He also expressed appreciation for maintenance at the senior center and for the removal of port-a-potties. Piper echoed Mr. Osborne's concerns regarding sidewalk improvement project communications and advocated for the use of rock rather than grass between the sidewalk and road.

Councilor Price inquired about delinquent resort tax payments. Finance Director Rice acknowledged that while progress had been made, some delinquencies remained. Price concurred with the need for improved communications surrounding the sidewalk improvements and emphasized the importance of engaging with residents. She also inquired about the walking path on Talbot Road, to which City Manager Hanks confirmed forward progress. Regarding the new farmers market on Nucleus Avenue, Hanks noted it did not meet city standards and that staff would work with organizers to bring the market into compliance.

Councilor Shepard raised safety concerns regarding individuals standing near traffic with signs by the Community Market and Nucleus Ave., citing a recent near-miss.

Councilor Lovering concurs with Piper to improve highway turn lanes on Hwy 2. Her concern is safety at Hwy 2 and Nucleus Ave. as well as congestion. She is also concerned with the sidewalk project communication, and raised the issue of tree removals, which can cause emotional responses from residents. Lovering also requested a review of visibility of yellow street paint, especially where cars are parking too close to intersections and creating safety hazards, particularly on 1st Avenue East near the Skatepark. Mayor Barnhart agreed that "No Parking" signage should be considered.

Mayor Barnhart also emphasized the importance of proactive communication, particularly as phase two of the sidewalk project proceeds. He called on staff to address overgrown grass throughout the city right of ways and to ensure that the city itself is in compliance before citing residents. He observed that cars are parking in restricted areas during the Community Market event and acknowledged police presence in the area.

CITY MANAGER REPORT

City Manager Hanks provided a comprehensive report, starting with an overview of recent interactions with the Community Market. A recent event coincided with an event at the Catholic Church, exacerbating parking issues. The following week showed improvements, though illegal parking persisted. He noted the Police Chief and Public Works Director are working for sustainable parking solutions at the Community Market.

A coordinated communication plan is in progress for two major infrastructure projects, including the Gateway to Glacier Safety and Mobility Project. The City is working with Jacobs Engineering and Big Sky Public Relations to facilitate homeowner communications and upcoming requests for temporary construction easement agreements. Mr Hanks noted tree and landscape disruptions are anticipated and extensive outreach, including open houses and direct mailings will continue to ensure awareness and transparency.

Mr. Hanks noted that the Council Policy and Procedures were removed from the agenda pending final review by the City Attorney. He also previewed an upcoming Planning Commission public hearing on June 12, 2025, concerning a zone change at 2155 West (Lazy Day Trailer Park), where zoning inconsistencies on the parcel are being addressed. This item is scheduled for Council review on July 7, 2025. Hanks also referenced a nearby minor subdivision application that will bypass the Planning Commission and go directly to Council for approval.

The City Manager acknowledged difficulties with getting the municipal pool operational but remained optimistic about meeting the June 14th opening date. He also mentioned meetings with Fish and Wildlife

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regarding trash security and bear-related safety, citing recent bear sightings near Crescent Drive and River's Edge Park.

Addressing concerns over weeds in public rights-of-way, Hanks reported that a maintenance schedule is being developed in collaboration with the Parks Department. The city is currently working with a limited staff, but the goal is to establish clear standards. He explained the city's weed abatement policy, noting that grass exceeding eight inches in height constitutes a violation. Property owners are given 10–14 days to rectify issues after notification, after which the city may take corrective action and bill the owner.

OTHER REPORTS:

Police Chief Stephens reported adjustments to signage around the Community Market to improve safety and accommodate increased parking demand. Temporary signage and speed limits will be implemented during market events to reduce pedestrian risks. He described a mitigation strategy involving temporary 15-mph zones at key intersections.

Councilor Price inquired about the availability of parking at the junior high school for market attendees. City Manager Hanks confirmed that the Community Market had a shuttle service from the Jr. High in place for a recent Community Market event that coincided with a Catholic Church event which limited the available parking for the market.

MISCELLANEOUS

Correspondence

ADJOURN: Councilor Lovering motioned to adjourn at 7:50 p.m., seconded by Councilor Shepard.

Mayor

City Clerk